

# TOP 10 TRENDS

TO LEVERAGE FOR GREATER  
SALES SUCCESS

smarter selling  
stop talking and start listening!

# KNOW YOUR MARKET TO FIND MORE OPPORTUNITIES

Technology is just one of the many impacts on sales strategy. As high performing salespeople, we understand the key to success is knowing your market, and its behaviours, so we can adapt and find opportunities to deliver greater revenue.

We have identified these key trends to adapt into your sales strategies and processes for greater success.

1. Buyers are always evolving
2. To sell without selling
3. Shorter time lines
4. Millennials
5. Influence of the finance dept
6. Quality content for sales engagement
7. The beauty of the CRM
8. Heart-centered sales
9. LinkedIn is sales 'gold'
10. Staff training

## **BONUS TREND**

11. Gen X



## Trend 1

### Buyers are always evolving

Buyers are doing a lot more research before they need to engage with a business online or in person, prior to making their purchase decision. They can go to review sites, speak to peers who have tried your solution, they can see what your business is sharing on LinkedIn.

It means your sales message needs to be consistent and have absolute clarity. It needs to be clear how your solution will assist them and then make it easy for them to understand why they should buy, and make it easy to buy from you.

**BUSINESSES THAT ARM THEIR TEAM WITH SOFT SKILLS ACROSS PHONE AND FACE TO FACE WILL WIN THE RACE COMPARED TO THOSE WHO HIDE BEHIND THEIR COMPUTERS EMAILING CLIENTS**



## Trend 2

### To sell without selling

We hear the terms 'the honest sale', 'the authentic sale', the 'consultative approach'.

Like a doctor makes a diagnosis and prescribes a treatment – as does the salesperson consult with the prospect, assess their situation thoroughly and offer the best solution for the prospect. They prescribe the aligned solution. The salesperson has proven they are an authority – they are a trusted advisor.

When they provide a perfectly aligned solution, the time they have invested in asking the right questions and deeply understanding their client will pay off. The investment establishes trust.

The prospect believes the true intent of the salesperson is to help them solve their problem – not just sell them an 'off the shelf' solution. They become open to taking the advice given by an expert. There's no need to push, persuade or use manipulative 'dirty tactics'.

The salesperson is treating every conversation and every deal with a partnership mindset. Any lost deal is viewed as an opportunity to do better next time by the prospect. The most successful salespeople will be the ones who are present, have a genuine intention to be helpful and look beyond their paycheck.

**THE WINNERS ARE THE TRUSTED ADVISORS**

## Trend 3

### Short time lines, quick turnarounds



That's the nature of business today. Organisations focus on quarterly results and long term planning can take a 'back seat'.

One of the impacts of this is that many more major decisions are made in much shorter time frames. The buyer may have already done some research and by the time they speak to the seller they are on the verge of making their decision.

The lead time for your sales team 'to weave their magic' is drastically reduced. How agile is your sales team?

Your team needs to be able to adapt and think quickly on their feet. Here are some tips for success.

1. Be first off the mark with a productive, explorative meeting and then a powerful alignment in your solution proposal.
2. Listen carefully and 'read' the client.
3. Assume that who they are talking to is the decision maker. Assume that there are also other key decision makers/influencers in the buying decision.
4. Create alignment as soon as possible, clearly demonstrate the intention to help and establish trust. Clearly conveying authority on this product / service.

THE KEY IS TO ESTABLISH TRUST AS FAST AS POSSIBLE

## Trend 4

### The might of the Millennials



Born 1981-1996, they have considerable buying power. They understand media and how it works and demonstrate certain behaviours as consumers.

They are the first generation born into a world where accessibility and immediacy are the norm and a basic expectation.

1. They expect instant gratification. No need to wait for food – there's Uber Eats.
2. They are native technology users. As salespeople they type directly into a CRM system as opposed to note pads.
3. Change and evolution of products, concepts and ideas is the norm.
4. They don't have the baggage of 'this won't work, I tried this once'.
5. They rely on product reviews.

Their challenges:

- Picking up the phone to speak with someone
- Building relationships over the phone
- Knowing there's a time and place for mobile use
- Not looking at their apple watch during meetings
- Keeping off their phone

What they need at work:

- Purpose
- Progression plans
- To be heard
- Flexible hours

GIVE THEM A FORUM TO BE HEARD

## Trend 5

# The influence of the finance department



In many businesses one of the key decision makers is the Financial Director – they are making sure budgets are adhered to, there is a clear ROI and value for money. They are one of many influencers in a B2B sale. There may also be the HR Director, Learning & Development Manager and company trainer.

What does this mean for your sales team?

- Understand that if they aren't selling directly to the Finance Director they need to know their pain points and address these in the proposal.
- Be highly skilled to get a meeting with these influencers or - at the very least - ask enough of the right questions to understand what is important to them in order to address this in the proposal.
- Be highly adaptable to different needs from the array of decision makers in the business.
- Know how to sell to one person while equipping that person to be able to 'sell it on' through the business.

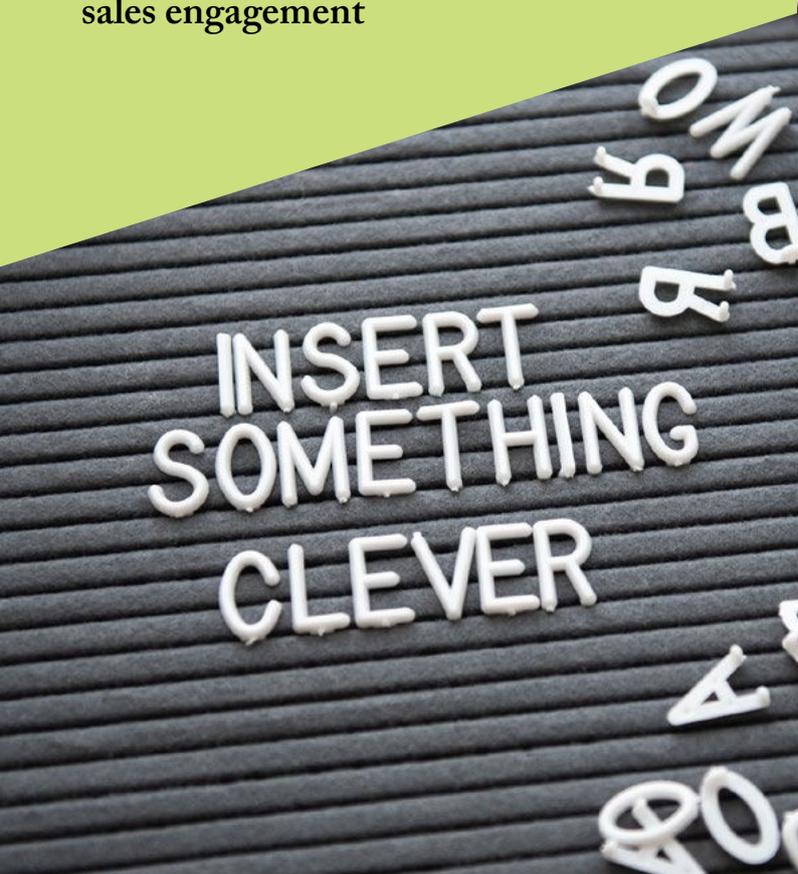
If the person you are speaking to is appointed to have the conversation with you – assume they are the decision maker. You can also find out who else is weighing in on the decision. The opportunity lies with the first person you speak with – they will be your ally! They are weighing up whether they will 'pass you up the chain'.

Arm them with the compelling reason to buy, that makes it very easy for them to sell it through the business. I call this the 'pull through'.

**ARM YOUR CONTACT WITH A COMPELLING REASON TO 'PULL THROUGH' YOUR OFFER**

## Trend 6

### Quality content for sales engagement



INSERT  
SOMETHING  
CLEVER

Does your content align with each step of the buyer journey?

Does it address their pain points at each stage in various formats?

There is content created to generate leads vs content to convert leads into customers.

For sales success, the team needs access to the right content to support conversations in establishing trust and thought leadership.

Salespeople are at the 'coalface'. They know the FAQs and the language prospects use. Sales teams need to collaborate with the content creation teams - to ensure they have the tools to evolve the sales conversation as they lead the prospect to conversion.

Later buyer journey content includes detailed brochures, video, webinars, case studies, LinkedIn articles and posts.

It's critical to produce high quality, thought leadership content to educate your prospect about why your solution is the best available.

**Q: WHAT TYPE OF THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CONTENT DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR SALES TEAM OR THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR SELLING?**



## Trend 7

### The beauty of the CRM

Systems and technology stacks have been buzzwords for a while. Each year sees improvements in their simplicity, ease of use and efficiencies.

Leaders of sales teams are overjoyed at the data available and the transparency these tools provide. Despite this, there is still a reluctance in some salespeople to use them.

Salespeople need to embrace new systems – particularly their CRM.

When a customer is the most valuable asset of a business, a CRM helps your business grow. The CRM is only as

powerful as the information it is 'given'. Everyone – including those working in sales – needs to be committed to entering accurate, timely and useful information.

A CRM empowers the salesperson with the most up-to-date information on a prospect or client at their fingertips.

As sales success is still dependent on one key thing – communication – having the right insights in the CRM is a true competitive advantage.

Those salespeople who are still 'dragging the chain' and not embracing their CRM with the opportunities it provides, will be one step behind those that do.

DATA OUT IS ONLY AS GOOD AS DATA IN

## Trend 8

### Doing good at the heart of what we do



Our businesses and our sales teams need to evolve their skills so it is clear they are operating with a clear intention to help and care about customers, suppliers, employees, the community AND the planet. Think of it as 'heart-centered' sales.

Making profits and doing good at a micro and macro level can go hand in hand.

If you have company values around responsibility and accountability – do you have a Mission Statement to reflect this?

Ensure the team understands how this value should influence how they operate with colleagues in your business and outside the business.

Clients should be able to see your business is remaining accountable to these values. Your sales team needs to be able to articulate and share these values at a relevant time with clients.

**ENSURE YOUR TEAM KNOW THE 'WHY'**

## Trend 9

### Continuous training for sales success

In 2010 training looked like this:

- Day 1: here's your desk, here's your phone, here's the phone book. Get on with it and start calling.

For high performing teams, NOW it looks like this:

- Interactive online staff training
- Product training
- CRM training
- Regular sales and customer service training so they keep evolving and enhancing their skills.

We know that upskilling employees is key. Your team needs to be ahead of the curve, accountable, proactive, motivated and driven. You want them to be upskilled and polished in their day to day interactions with colleagues and clients. To ensure this, your business needs to set them up for success.

This starts right from the induction throughout their career in your company.

The team leader must understand the latest approaches to managing sales teams. They need to ensure the team understands how a sale happens, understanding that buyers are always evolving and how technology and content are influencing the buyer journey.

It's key to engage external sales training experts for their skills in identifying gaps, their objective overview and because they specialise in contemporary sales methodologies. You want to choose companies that have experienced salespeople doing the training, over companies using facilitators delivering set content, who've never been salespeople.

It's key that the leadership team supports and prioritises sales training. It sends the right message to the team, helping them commit to their development. The sales team leaders also need to be part of the training to be aligned with what their team is learning.

**REGULAR SALES AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING  
ENSURES YOU ARE BUILDING HIGH PERFORMING,  
MASTERFUL SALESPEOPLE AND GUARANTEES  
YOUR BUSINESS GROWTH.**

## Trend 10

**LinkedIn**

is sales 'gold'

There are 675 million members globally on LinkedIn – it is **the** channel for business content. High performance salespeople understand they have to be where the buyer is.

Salespeople can build their personal brands, demonstrate their thought leadership and build their own following.

What do they know their customers need to know?  
How can they help them?

Team leaders need to ensure the sales team have access to the best content their company has to share. Sharing the latest case studies, videos or blogs is perfect content to educate followers and lead them further along the buyer journey.

It's easy for even the most reluctant salesperson to be involved on LinkedIn. In fact - if they aren't on there – the team leader needs to understand why and help them overcome any barriers. It's key for salespeople to regularly post their company's content, make comments and 'like' relevant content.

It shows they are actively engaged in their industry. It makes it easier to build trust with prospects and clients. InMail and LinkedIn messages are key for salespeople to extend their reach.

ENSURE YOUR SALES TEAM ARE LEVERAGING LINKEDIN  
TO GAIN TRACTION WITH LEADS AND CLIENTS



## Bonus Trend

## Generation X

Born 1965-1980 – they are 38-53 years old and will have understood what it's like or may have lived in a household that experienced 'doing without' or having to wait until 'the money was saved up'. They are used to working longer in jobs and slowly working their way up the ladder.

In fact, many may have not even considered a ladder and just wanted to get in and do a good job. Rewards are something they believed they would earn over time. They don't expect to be a director without earning their stripes.

Gen X strengths:

- Loyalty
- Longevity
- Building trust
- Being reliable
- Doing what they said they were going to do
- Eye contact

Gen X challenges:

- Technology isn't native so for some, adapting to new systems can be frustrating.
- Should they not be fast at typing, they can be slower to fill in CRMS and doing proposals.
- If they have worked for a long time in one place they have legacy issues. 'We tried that; it didn't work then, it won't work now'.

Some business owners may be left behind by not adapting to current trends – instead they complain about the market being harder. This may suggest they are not evolving and adapting their business to what clients need. Gen X leaders can embrace contemporary approaches to managing sales teams and how a sale happens in 2021.

**THE SOLUTION: LOTS OF TRAINING EVERY YEAR!  
THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A DYNAMIC LEADER  
AND A MASTERFUL SALESPERSON**

## Sales training to shift mindsets and deliver higher profits

Grounded in robust, proven methodologies from a sales expert with over 28 years' experience – Smarter Selling sales training ensures you/your team gain enhanced sales skills across the entire sales process to achieve quick and lasting business growth.

Charmaine Keegan, Founder and Director, is a high performing salesperson and trainer who is passionate, enthusiastic and energetic. The training delivers relevant, practical skills, focused on high performance, and is renowned for being inspiring and highly motivational.

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